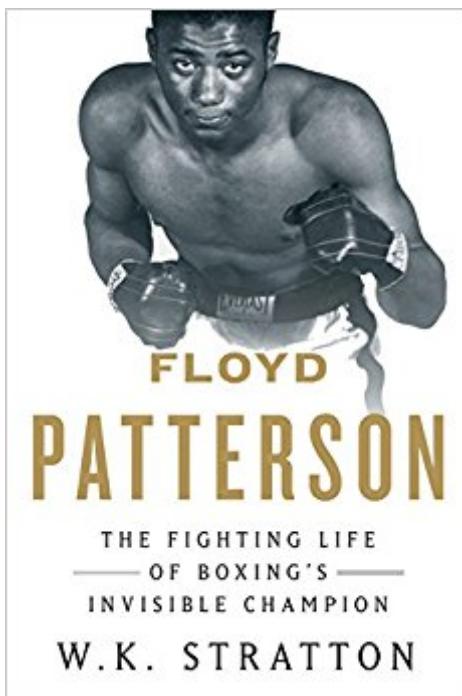


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Floyd Patterson: The Fighting Life Of Boxing's Invisible Champion



Synopsis

"A well-researched and overdue tribute. Like one of Patterson's reliable left hooks, Stratton sharply recounts the life of an important, but often forgotten, two-time world heavyweight champion."

• Gary Andrew Poole, author of *PacMan: Behind the Scenes with Manny Pacquiao* In 1956, Floyd Patterson became, at age twenty-one, the youngest boxer to claim the title of world heavyweight champion. Later, he was the first ever to lose and regain that honor. Here, the acclaimed author W. K. Stratton chronicles the life of "the Gentle Gladiator" • an athlete overshadowed by Ali's theatrics and Liston's fearsome reputation, and a civil rights activist overlooked in the Who's Who of race politics. From the Gramercy Gym and wildcard manager Cus D'Amato to the final rematch against Ali in 1972, Patterson's career spanned boxing's golden age. He won an Olympic gold medal, had bouts with Moore and Johansson, and was interviewed by James Baldwin, Gay Talese, and Budd Schulberg. A complex, misunderstood figure • he once kissed an opponent at the end of a match • he was known for his peekaboo stance and soft-spoken nature. Floyd Patterson was boxing's invisible champion, but in this deeply researched and beautifully written biography he comes vividly to life and is finally given his due • as one of the most artful boxers of his time and as one of our great sportsmen, a man who shaped the world in and out of the ring.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 1 edition (July 10, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0151014302

ISBN-13: 978-0151014309

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 44 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #787,989 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #128 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Sports & Outdoors > Boxing, Wrestling & MMA > Boxing #311 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Individual Sports > Boxing #1311 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > History of Sports

Customer Reviews

"Stratton offers boxing fans a solidly researched, popularly written study of a complex, good man. A

clear winner." *Library Journal* (starred) "Stratton's attention to detail is impressive, and he seems to have uncovered every little tidbit about Patterson's life both in and out of the ring, making this warm biography a must for boxing fanatics. An engaging, breezy portrait of an underappreciated boxing giant." *Kirkus Reviews* A "deftly written autobiography...Stratton reminds us of Floyd Patterson's remarkable talent, mortality, and determination." *Publisher's Weekly* "An even-handed, surprisingly readable account of one of America's neglected sports figures." *Booklist* "A well-researched and overdue tribute to Floyd Patterson. Like one of Patterson's reliable left hooks, Stratton sharply recounts the life of an important, but often forgotten, two-time world heavyweight champion." *Gary Andrew Poole*, author, *PacMan: Behind The Scenes With Manny Pacquiao* • The Greatest Pound-for-Pound Fighter in the World "Stratton provides some fascinating insight into, surely, the most inscrutable heavyweight champion we've ever had. His book about Floyd Patterson is comprehensive and sensitive, as it seeks to help us understand a man who seemed so temperamentally in contradiction to his profession." *Frank Deford*, author of *Over Time and Everybody's All-American* "Floyd Patterson was one of the more beguiling and hypnotic figures to stride across the stage of twentieth-century boxing. W. K. Stratton tells the story of this proud and mannered man with insight and artful compassion." *Wil Haygood*, author of *Sweet Thunder: The Life and Times of Sugar Ray Robinson* "W. K. Stratton's Floyd Patterson revives the life of a boxer who was larger outside the ring than within it, a boxer who had a heart and humanity (and courage) beyond what his fight record revealed. He overcame obstacles and persevered in a manner that his more ferocious opponents did not." *Gay Talese*, author of *A Writer's Life and The Silent Season of a Hero* "The extant literature on Floyd Patterson had heretofore been the province of often-fawning admirers, but with Floyd Patterson, W. K. Stratton has managed to produce a refreshingly honest and even-handed deconstruction of the owner of the uneasiest head to wear a crown this side of Henry IV." *George Kimball* "A knockout biography of the best boxer in 1950s and early 1960s America. From winning an Olympic Gold medal to developing the peek-a-boo stance that influenced Muhammad Ali, Patterson was a monumental influence on the boxing profession during its Cold War era heyday. Highly recommended!" *Douglas Brinkley*, bestselling biographer and professor of history at Rice University

"A well-researched and overdue tribute. Like one of Patterson's reliable left hooks, Stratton sharply recounts the life of an important, but often forgotten, two-time world heavyweight champion." *Gary Andrew Poole*, author of *PacMan: Behind the Scenes with Manny Pacquiao* 1956,

Floyd Patterson became, at age twenty-one, the youngest boxer to claim the title of world heavyweight champion. Later, he was the first ever to lose and regain that honor. Here, the acclaimed author W. K. Stratton chronicles the life of "the Gentle Gladiator" — an athlete overshadowed by Ali's theatrics and Liston's fearsome reputation, and a civil rights activist overlooked in the Who's Who of race politics. From the Gramercy Gym and wildcard manager Cus D'Amato to the final rematch against Ali in 1972, Patterson's career spanned boxing's golden age. He won an Olympic gold medal, had bouts with Moore and Johansson, and was interviewed by James Baldwin, Gay Talese, and Budd Schulberg. A complex, misunderstood figure — he once kissed an opponent at the end of a match — he was known for his peekaboo stance and soft-spoken nature. Floyd Patterson was boxing's invisible champion, but in this deeply researched and beautifully written biography he comes vividly to life and is finally given his due — as one of the most artful boxers of his time and as one of our great sportsmen, a man who shaped the world in and out of the ring.

This book was fascinating from the first page. So well-written. Really a compelling read. I knew of Floyd Patterson's name and his era, but didn't know much about him. I really enjoyed learning about him and his life. He was such an interesting, gentle character who was ultimately an independent thinker, doing what he thought was right, regardless of pressure from others. For instance, JFK, who invited him to the White House, didn't want him fighting Sonny Liston because he was tied to the Mob-run IBC. At the risk of alienating the President, who Floyd admired very much, he went ahead and fought Liston. Floyd took it hard when he lost. Very hard. But when others who had beat him in the past eventually lost themselves, he'd go back to the locker room where they sat, head down, and be supportive, telling them he knew how they felt and it would get better. When he first went to box in AK, he looked out on the crowd and was astonished to find only whites there on the first floor with black people relegated to the balcony. He said he would never again fight in a segregated arena. Right on!! It was really cool when he went to Sweden. How they loved him there! He was shocked and delighted to find this place where black and white people walked together down the street as natural as could be. He was not treated as a second-class citizen there and inter-racial relationships were apparently not an issue. Hooray!! I always admire people that have it hard young and find a way to transcend the odds. It didn't sound like it ever got easy for Floyd, yet he remained a good man, often taking the narrow road when he could have taken the easy way. Great biography.

Great look at a largely forgotten Heavyweight Champ. Floyd was really the first set the boxing

records (youngest heavyweight champ, and the first 2X HW Champion). He also held the title for 5 years, which is hard to do. Unfortunately, he did all of this when boxing records didn't mean much, and then Ali showed up and made boxing his own (overshadowing Floyd's legacy). Only now, when we look back (at books like this) do we see that Floyd's accomplishments really mean something, which is sad. This book does a great job of showing how Floyd did great things in and out of the ring, but did so under a blanket of invisibility (and in a respectable, caring way). I think it's time to give him his due, and mark him as one of the best Heavyweights of all time, and this book certainly does a good job in promoting that.

First of all I must say I am not a boxing fan. However, Floyd Patterson is the first heavyweight champion that I remember. Author W. K. Stratton has written a very commendable biography of what some people refer to as the "invisible champion." Patterson had a troubled childhood which led him to being sent to the Wiltwyck School for Boys in New York state. We all have individuals who help us in our formative years and here he met people who had a positive influence on his life. Boxing was to prove to be his ticket out of the slums. Many of the big names of boxing during the late 1960's and into the Muhammad Ali years are all included here in this book. Rocky Marciano retired undefeated with a record of 49 victories, and Archie Moore and Patterson battled it out for the heavyweight championship in 1956 with Patterson coming out the winner as the youngest heavyweight champion. He was to lose the championship on June 26, 1959, to the Swede Ingemar Johansson in Yankee Stadium. Patterson then became the first to reclaim the heavyweight championship in 1960 when Floyd floored Ingo in New York's Polo Grounds. The author does an excellent job in covering the career of Floyd Patterson in this book. He also brings out the personalities of other boxers such as the likes of the aforementioned Ali and Sonny Liston. Broadcaster Howard Cosell hitched on to Patterson's career as a way to promote himself and when Floyd no longer was popular Cosell attached himself to Muhammad Ali. What I personally like about Patterson is his humble attitude and his desire to assist others as a way of saying thank you to those who helped him. He showed insecurities as we all do by wanting to leave an arena by using a disguise of a beard, but he was not one to get involved in alcohol or other drugs which led to the ruination of the lives of other boxers. Patterson did, however, lose his life prematurely on May 11, 2006, as did other boxers from dementia brought on by too many blows to the head. As I said I'm not a boxing fan, but the name of Floyd Patterson is the first one I really remember as the heavyweight boxing champion. You need not be a boxing fan to enjoy the book. The author brings out the turmoil that took place in the United States beginning with several tragedies that took place

in 1963. I appreciate the fact there is no profanity in the book which makes it appropriate for young readers as well. If you're a sports fan with a limited interest in boxing I think this book would be a great addition to your library.

W. K. Stratton has unearthed a forgotten giant of boxing. It traces the genesis of Floyd Patterson's love of boxing from his troubled youth to his meeting Cus D'Amato and the twilight of his career. There are lots of historical facts about not only Floyd Patterson, but Muhammad Ali, Sonny Liston, and Cus D'Amato. Fight fans will love it, not only for the boxing lore, but for piercing through the fallacy that Floyd Patterson was an "Uncle Tom."

During my tour in The Republic of Vietnam 1967 I was stationed in a remote area named Gia Lei Combat base. It was in "Indian Territory" as we referred to it. Half way between Danang, and Dong Ho. We were a blocking force for the 3rd Marine Division HQs. Very remote, and out of the way. Never had any Celebs come up to our camp, until my good friend Floyd Patterson visited us. He had lunch with us, and was very down to earth. He was very special to us, and gave a big boost to our morale. As I told him then, "You will always be our Champ".

I learned more about this great champion than I ever thought I would. I heard about the book on a radio interview with the author. The book gives a great account of his life and times and is well written. I would recommend this book to boxing fans everywhere and those that love a good bio.

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